



## New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

Manual:	CP&P	Child Protection and Permanency	Effective Date:
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Chapter:	A	Worker Safety	8-29-2017
Subchapter:	1	General	
Issuance:	100	<b>Worker Safety Issues</b>	

### Threats Against Field Staff

**8-29-2017**

Child protective services intervention may inadvertently cause stress to client families. Some particularly volatile clients may react to CP&P intervention with violence or threats of violence toward Division staff.

When a Worker perceives a threat of physical violence from a client (in person, by letter, e-mail, or by telephone contact), the Worker:

- Secures his or her own immediate safety by leaving the situation/home as necessary (Note: When not able to secure safety by removing himself/herself from the situation, etc., the CP&P employee is entitled to defend and protect himself/herself, if he or she is physically assaulted and he or she reasonably believes that physical force is necessary to protect himself/herself against death or serious bodily harm. A CP&P employee's right to self defense is not altered, diminished or increased because he or she is employed by the Division);
- Seeks the assistance of the Human Services Police assigned to the Local Office or local police authorities, if immediate action or protection of the Worker, child or other person in the home is needed (see [CP&P-II-C-4-300](#));
- Advises his or her Supervisor, the Casework Supervisor or Local Office Manager as soon as possible (from the field if the situation is critical);
- Documents the threat on a NJ SPIRIT Contact Sheet, CP&P Form [26-52](#) and/or Critical Incident Report, CP&P Form [21-10](#), if appropriate;
- Refers to the threat/risk to worker safety when later completing case recording documents; and

- Drafts wording for a WORKER ALERT label for the case record, pending supervisory approval.

The Local Office Manager contacts the Workplace Violence Coordinator to report all threats to staff.

The assigned Worker and Supervisor conference the situation to determine whether the presenting threat requires the need either for a teamed response or a joint CP&P - law enforcement response.

In addition, whenever the Supervisor learns of a serious or potentially dangerous threat to a Worker or other CP&P staff, he or she consults with LO administrative staff and the Human Services Police to determine whether a criminal complaint should be filed with the local police and/or other protective measures taken. If a message (i.e., a threat) is recorded on an individual employee's voice mail, consult the DAG as to its evidentiary application, if any.

Tape recording in-person contacts or telephone conversations with the client (an individual making an overt or covert threat) could serve as a form of protection for staff, to document CP&P intervention and client response. This remedy is an exception to policy, however, and requires notification to the client and the written, advanced approval of the Area Director. See [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#).

See [CP&P-IX-L-1-100](#) procedures for Representation of State Employees Assaulted or Threatened in the Course of Their Official Duties, regarding assistance with legal representation for assaulted or threatened CP&P employees.

## **Documenting Worker Safety Issues**

**12-19-2011**

Particularly volatile/potentially dangerous clients, and client home/neighborhood situations which could present risk to the personal safety of CP&P field staff should be identified and documented in appropriate case record materials, including but not limited to:

- the Screening Summary, DCF Form [1-1](#), completed in NJS, if such information is learned during screening;
- the Investigation Summary, DCF Form [2-1](#), or CWS Assessment Summary, DCF Form [3-1](#), if such information is learned during initial response;
- the Discussion of Safety and Risk Factors section of the Family Summary/Case Plan, CP&P Form [26-81](#);
- the Case Summary for Closing/Transfer, CP&P Form [26-57](#);
- the Intraoffice Case Transfer Checklist, CP&P Form [26-54](#);

- the outside of the CP&P case record; and
- the Worker's case Notebook Sheet, CP&P Form [26-10](#).

## **Worker Alert Labels**

**5-15-2017**

Worker Alert labels should be added in NJ Spirit whenever it is necessary to alert staff to a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation. Upon application of a Worker Alert label, a contact note must be added to the case to explain the reason for the label and any appropriate precautions to be taken when interacting with specified clients.

A white WORKER ALERT label may also be applied to the front of the CP&P case record jacket to alert staff to dangerous or potentially dangerous situations. These labels have ample room to permit specific concerns, noted in short statements, to be written directly on them, such as:

- a history of assaultive or violent behavior in the family, and the cause(s) of that behavior, if known (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse, mental illness, domestic violence);
- guns/weapons in the home/carried by family members;
- attack dog on premises;
- residence in high crime or extremely rural, isolated, or otherwise dangerous area;
- the residence is a "crack house."

The decision whether to apply a WORKER ALERT label to a case record, and what, specifically, to note on the label, is made by the Worker and his Supervisor during case conferencing activities with input from the Casework Supervisor, if necessary. Such a decision shall be made after the initial field response, when a case is being prepared for transfer out of the Intake Program or to another office or unit, following a significant incident or investigation finding, or at any time deemed appropriate.

Note: ALERT labels are temporarily removed or covered when records are subpoenaed as such labels are strictly meant for "in house" purposes and could be viewed as prejudicial toward a client family when a case is reviewed by a court.

## **Worker Safety Intervention Plan**

**3-13-2006**

A worker safety intervention plan is formalized by the assigned Worker and Supervisor during case conferencing when a particular client-- an adult or a child -- or family has been identified as being potentially dangerous to staff or presenting a risk to the personal safety of staff and/or authority figures. A worker safety intervention plan can be

a simple written outline or paragraph describing specific precautions to be taken upon intervention. Approval by the Casework Supervisor may be necessary, depending on the nature of the plan. Copies of the plan are kept by the Worker and Supervisor, and a copy is attached to the Resource Sheet filed in the case record. Worker safety concerns are also documented in NJ SPIRIT applications, to produce DCF Form [1-1](#), Screening Summary, completed when documenting CPS reports or CWS referrals. If a WORKER ALERT label is on the record, the words "WORKER SAFETY INTERVENTION PLAN" shall be noted on the label to advise staff to REFER TO THAT PLAN BEFORE INITIATING CONTACT WITH THE CLIENT FAMILY. The plan is dated and reviewed periodically during case conferencing and whenever the Worker Alert label is reviewed.

A Worker safety intervention plan serves to promote the responding Worker's well-being/lessen risk of threat to personal safety when intervening/initiating contact with the client family. Details in the plan could include, but are not limited to:

- Where and when it is best to meet with the client (e.g., meet with the client at a neutral setting, not at the family home);
- Who, if anyone, should be present when CP&P field staff meet with the client (e.g., another CP&P staff member should be present during home visits; the Human Services Police should accompany the assigned Worker when new allegations are under investigation; the client's therapist may be willing to provide assistance/prevent a crisis);
- Whether or not the child should be present when CP&P meets with the parent(s);
- Specific actions to be taken under certain circumstances which have been in evidence in the past (e.g., immediately leave the client home -- with or without the children -- if the client appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or actively psychotic).

It may be necessary to seek relief from the Family Court to ensure the Worker's safety. Such an option should be discussed with the Litigation Specialist. The worker safety intervention plan could specify that relief from court will be pursued if a specific behavior persists or in the event of a new incident.

If an after-hours crisis is anticipated, the assigned Worker or Supervisor contacts SCR and leaves special instructions for case handling precautions. If a case presents ongoing serious concerns regarding risk to staff safety upon intervention, the Supervisor advises the County SPRU Coordinator, who forewarns the SPRU staff of risks associated with the case. In addition, the LO Manager consults with the SCR Administrator/designee to determine whether special arrangements are to be implemented to accommodate the case. Special arrangements may include requesting after hours assistance from the Human Service Police, in accordance with the Protocol for Requesting HSP Services, found in [CP&P-II-C-4-300](#).

**Procedures Related to Applying WORKER ALERT Labels to Case Records**  
**5-15-2017**

RESPONSIBILITY                      ACTION REQUIRED

Worker and Supervisor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish during case conferencing that the case situation presents danger to the personal safety of CP&amp;P staff, and therefore warrants the application of a WORKER ALERT label to the case record.</li> <li>2. Determine the specific wording to be printed on the label, and an effective date for the alert.</li> </ol>
Supervisor and Casework Supervisor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Discuss case situation to confirm that application of ALERT label to case record is warranted. (Optional)</li> </ol>
Supervisor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Advise Worker that necessity for ALERT label was confirmed by Casework Supervisor.</li> </ol>
Worker	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Document the ALERT and effective date on the case Notebook Sheet, CP&amp;P Form <a href="#">26-10</a>.</li> <li>6. Print the exact wording for the label and the effective date on a piece of paper. Attach to case record. Forward to clerical unit.</li> </ol>
Clerk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Type ALERT label and effective date. Apply label to lower right hand corner of case record.</li> </ol>
Head Clerk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Maintain an inventory of ALERT labels sufficient to meet field staff demands.</li> </ol>